

at least one means for each of said plurality of consumers to enter unutilized coupon information from printed coupons in their possession into their consumer account based on input of their consumer identification means;

at least one checkout register capable of collecting specific consumer purchase information, said register additionally being connected to said database;

means for reconciling the unutilized coupon information in said consumer account of said specific consumer with the specific consumer purchase information based on input of said consumer identification means of said specific consumer; and

means for updating a consumer account of said specific consumer to reflect utilization of coupons,

wherein said at least one means for each of said plurality of consumers to enter unutilized coupon information from printed coupons in their possession into their consumer account is the only means provided for consumers to add unutilized coupon information into their consumer account.

31. (New) The electronic coupon processing system of claim 30, wherein a consumer's frequent shopper card comprises said consumer identification means.
32. (New) The electronic coupon processing system of claim 30, wherein additional unutilized coupon information may be added to a consumer account by the system based on market information collected for a consumer associated with said consumer account.
33. (New) The electronic coupon processing system of claim 30, wherein said database is connected to registers at a particular store or group of stores.
34. (New) The electronic coupon processing system of claim 30, wherein said at least one

means for each of said plurality of consumers to enter unutilized coupon information from printed coupons in their possession consists of a scanner.

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35. (New) The electronic coupon processing system of claim 34, wherein said scanner is located in a store and said store further includes means for viewing and a printer for providing a printout of unutilized coupon information in a consumer's consumer account based on input of said consumer's consumer identification means.
 36. (New) The electronic coupon processing system of claim 35, wherein said printout includes an aisle location for products associated with said coupon information in said consumer account.
 37. (New) The electronic coupon processing system of claim 30, wherein said means for reconciling automatically sends both purchase information and coupon information directly to a clearinghouse or a manufacturer for reimbursement.
 38. (New) The electronic coupon processing system of claim 30, further comprising means for providing Internet review of unutilized coupon information in a consumer's consumer account based on input of said consumer's consumer identification means.
 39. (New) The electronic coupon processing system of claim 38, further comprising means to provide a printout of unutilized coupon information in a consumer's consumer account.

Remarks and Request for Reconsideration

Claims 1-29 have been canceled. Claims 30-39 are in the case. Support for these amendments can be found in the application as originally filed. No new matter has been added by this amendment.

Applied Prior Art

The system of Nichtberger is drawn to the elimination of the handling involved with paper coupons in favor of electronic distribution and redemption of coupons (see column 2, line 68 to column 3, line 12). “An electronic display of coupons valid for use in a particular store is presented to customers in that store” wherein a customer then “makes a selection of coupons from the display” (see the Abstract). Because customers select coupons off of a database, anti-fraud measures, such as a special card (column 5, line 47 to column 6, line 26) and time limitations (column 18, lines 15-24), must be employed to prevent misuse.

The system of Fajkowski uses a smart card for storing unutilized coupon information of a single consumer in RAM, to be read by a card reading periphery device at checkout. The smart card has its own bar code scanner for inputting coupon information into RAM. Fajkowski also discloses a kiosk with a coupon dispenser for adding electronic coupons to the smart cards. Again, customers are allowed to select coupons off of a database, and means such as access codes (column 8, lines 55-62) and PINs (column 28, line 38) are used to prevent misuse.

However, the present invention provides that “said at least one *means for each of said plurality of consumers to enter unutilized coupon information from printed coupons in their possession* into their consumer account *is the only means provided for consumers to add unutilized coupon information into their consumer account.*” By not allowing customers to select coupons off of a database, a potential source for fraud and misuse is eliminated. Other electronic coupons added to consumer accounts (see new claim 32) are beyond the control of the consumer.

Conclusion

For the above reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the application is in condition for allowance with claims 30-39 and requests reconsideration of the application. If there remain any issues that may be disposed of via a telephonic interview, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned at the local exchange given below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John K. Abokhair', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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I hereby certify that the CPA Request Transmittal, Preliminary Amendment, and one check for \$345 for the patent application of Dale Burns for an **ELECTRONIC COUPON PROCESSING SYSTEM** is being deposited with the United States Postal Service for "Express Mail" service under 37 C.F.R. § 1.10 on the date indicated above and are addressed to the Commissioner for Patents, Box CPA, Washington, D.C. 20231.

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